MARVEL
PSR 516

STRACZYNSKI
DEODATO JR
BROOKS

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

SKIN DEEP
PART 2 of 4

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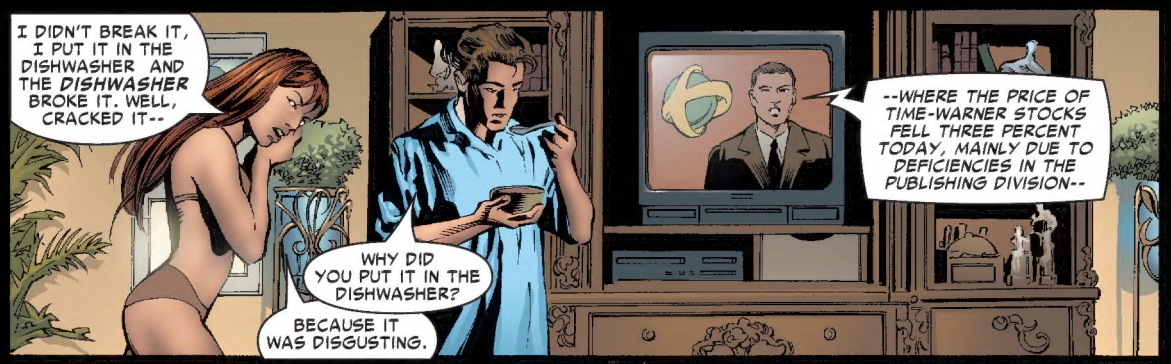
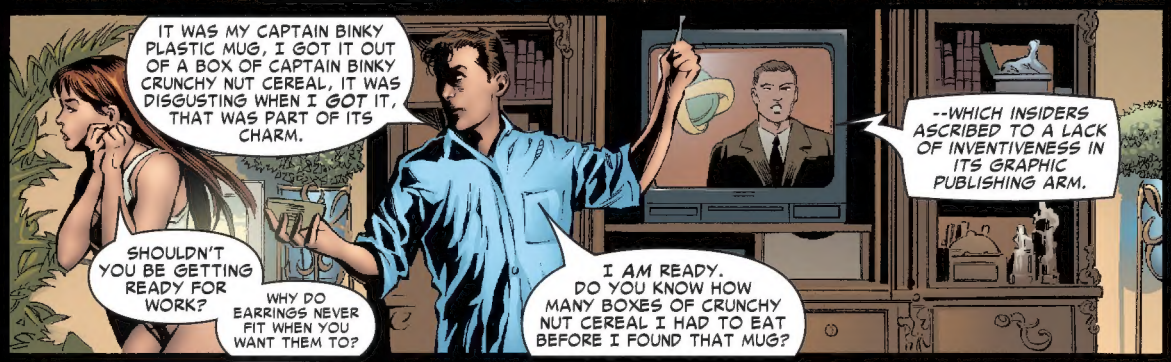
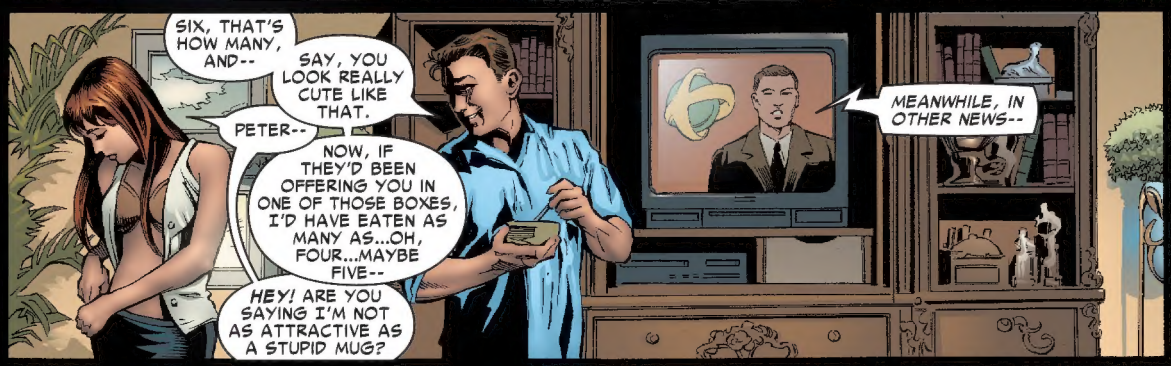
Let's just say it wasn't pretty.
YOU'RE SURE THERE WAS SOMEBODY INSIDE HERE?
THE NIGHT WATCHMAN SAID THE LIGHTS WERE ON AND SOMEBODY WAS WORKING HERE RIGHT BEFORE THE BLAST!
EVEN IF HE'S RIGHT, THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL ANYBODY COULD'VE SURVIVED A BLAST THIS BIG. WHEN IT WENT UP THEY COULD HEAR IT ALL THE WAY TO PATERSON, I --
CHIEF, OVER HERE!
IS HE ALIVE?
I CAN'T TELL...HE'S COVERED IN SOME KIND OF METAL. AND CHECK OUT THE CANISTERS.
CAUTION VIBRANIUM
VIBRANIUM? HOLY...
OKAY, WE CAN'T WAIT FOR A STRETCHER, WE HAVE TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE FAST. THIS WHOLE PLACE COULD GO UP ANY SECOND.

WE'RE COMING OUT AND WE'VE GOT A WOUNDED CIVILIAN. HAVE THE PARAMEDICS STANDING BY AND GET *FEMA* ON THE LINE, STAT!
WE'VE GOT TOXIC SUBSTANCES ON THE GROUND, INCLUDING VIBRANIUM. WE NEED TO GET EVERYBODY WE CAN TO CLEAN THIS OUT BEFORE--
NO...
CHIEF!
LET GO OF ME...YOU CAN'T TELL THEM WHAT HAPPENED... IF THEY FIND OUT...YOU'LL DESTROY EVERYTHING, ALL MY WORK--
LOOK, RIGHT NOW WE'VE JUST GOT TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE--
I SAID LET GO OF ME!
UNNNH!

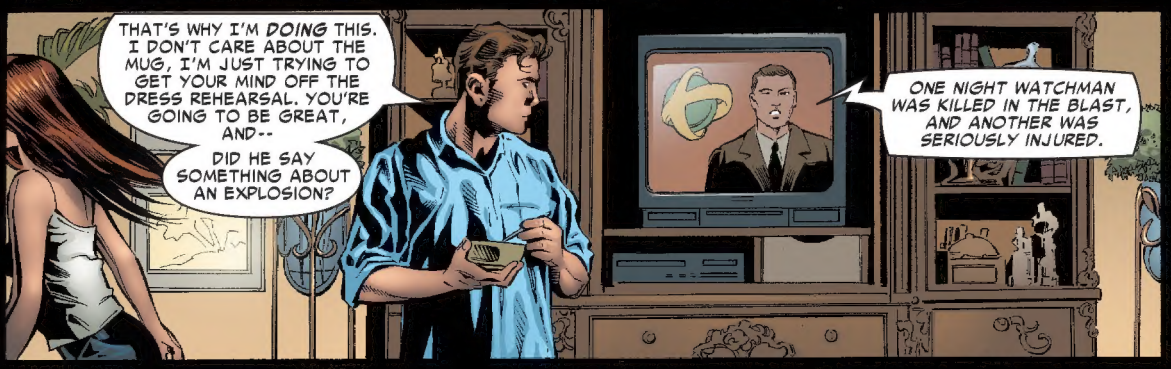
NO... NO!
COME ON! WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE! MOVE!
KER-RASSH!
"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU BROKE IT?"


I DIDN'T BREAK IT, I PUT IT IN THE DISHWASHER AND THE DISHWASHER BROKE IT. WELL, CRACKED IT--
WHY DID YOU PUT IT IN THE DISHWASHER?
BECAUSE IT WAS DISGUSTING.
--WHERE THE PRICE OF TIME-WARNER STOCKS FELL THREE PERCENT TODAY, MAINLY DUE TO DEFICIENCIES IN THE PUBLISHING DIVISION--

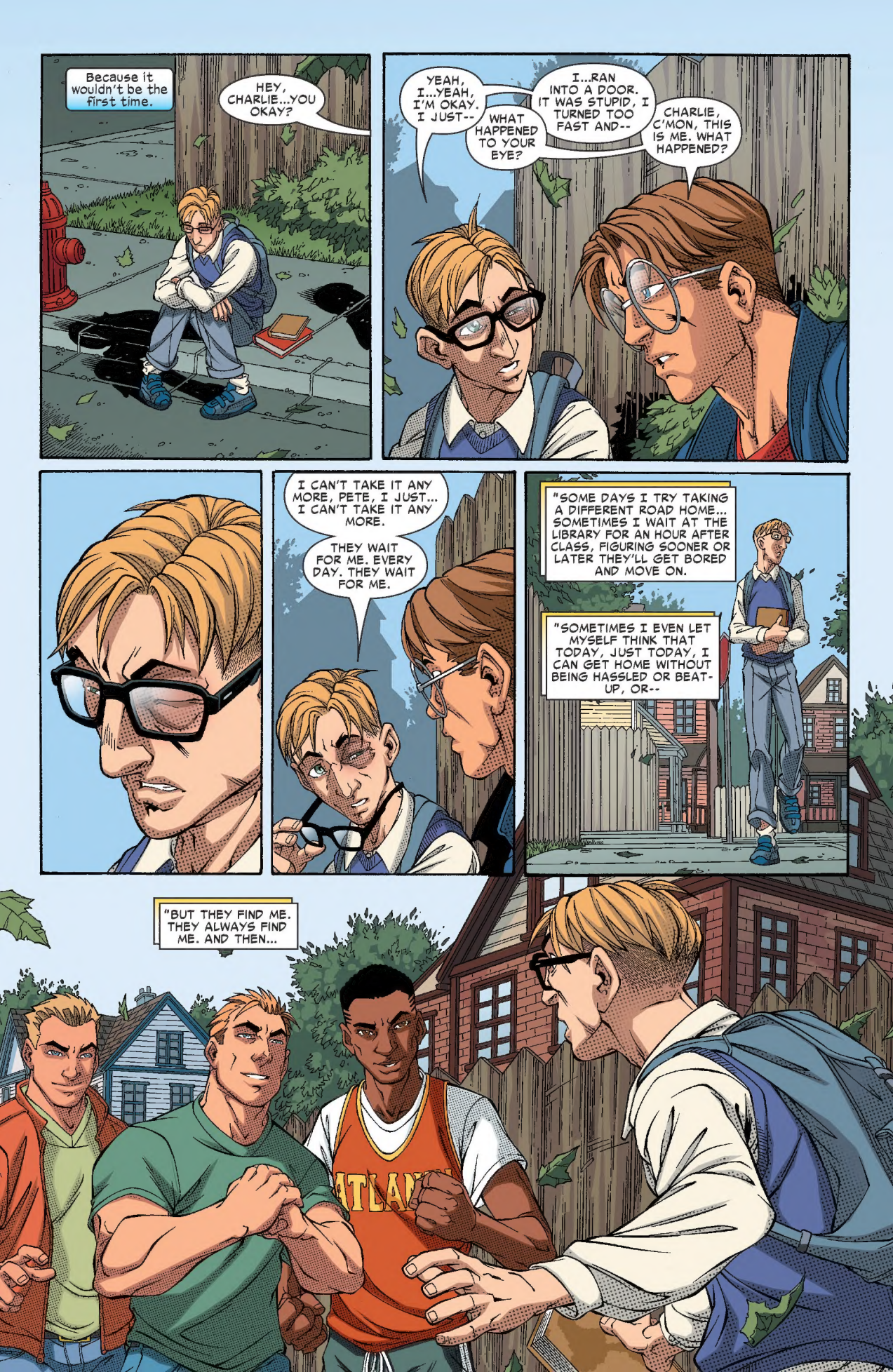

IT WAS MY CAPTAIN BINKY PLASTIC MUG, I GOT IT OUT OF A BOX OF CAPTAIN BINKY CRUNCHY NUT CEREAL, IT WAS DISGUSTING WHEN I GOT IT, THAT WAS PART OF ITS CHARM.
SHOULDN'T YOU BE GETTING READY FOR WORK?
WHY DO EARRINGS NEVER FIT WHEN YOU WANT THEM TO?
I AM READY. DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY BOXES OF CRUNCHY NUT CEREAL I HAD TO EAT BEFORE I FOUND THAT MUG?
--WHICH INSIDERS ASCRIBED TO A LACK OF INVENTIVENESS IN ITS GRAPHIC PUBLISHING ARM.


SIX, THAT'S HOW MANY, AND--
SAY, YOU LOOK REALLY CUTE LIKE THAT.
PETER--
NOW, IF THEY'D BEEN OFFERING YOU IN ONE OF THOSE BOXES, I'D HAVE EATEN AS MANY AS...OH, FOUR...MAYBE FIVE--
HEY! ARE YOU SAYING I'M NOT AS ATTRACTIVE AS A STUPID MUG?
MEANWHILE, IN OTHER NEWS--

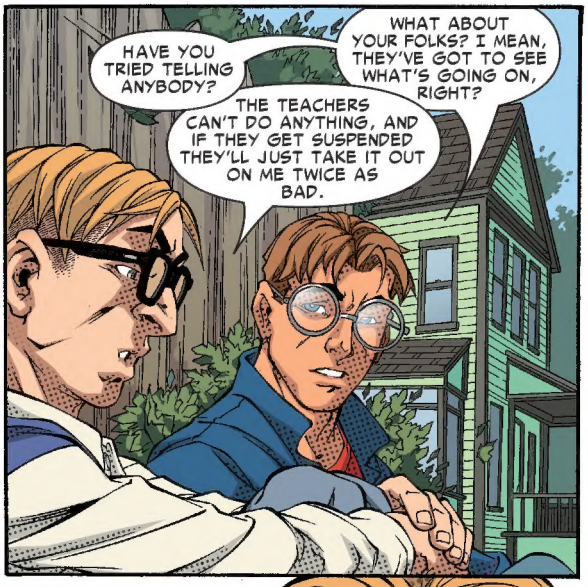
TO A SIX-YEAR-OLD? NO. NOW, IF WE'RE TALKING HERE THIRTEEN, THEN--
I'M NOT HAVING THIS CONVERSATION ANY MORE. WE HAVE A DRESS REHEARSAL TODAY, AND THIS IS JUST SILLY--
--A MIDNIGHT EXPLOSION ROCKED THE TERMINAL ROW INDUSTRIAL PARK TODAY AS ONE OF THE MAIN RENTAL STRUCTURES ERUPTED IN A BLAST OF FIRE AND SMOKE THAT COULD BE SEEN FOR MILES.


THAT'S WHY I'M DOING THIS. I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE MUG, I'M JUST TRYING TO GET YOUR MIND OFF THE DRESS REHEARSAL. YOU'RE GOING TO BE GREAT, AND--
DID HE SAY SOMETHING ABOUT AN EXPLOSION?
ONE NIGHT WATCHMAN WAS KILLED IN THE BLAST, AND ANOTHER WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED.

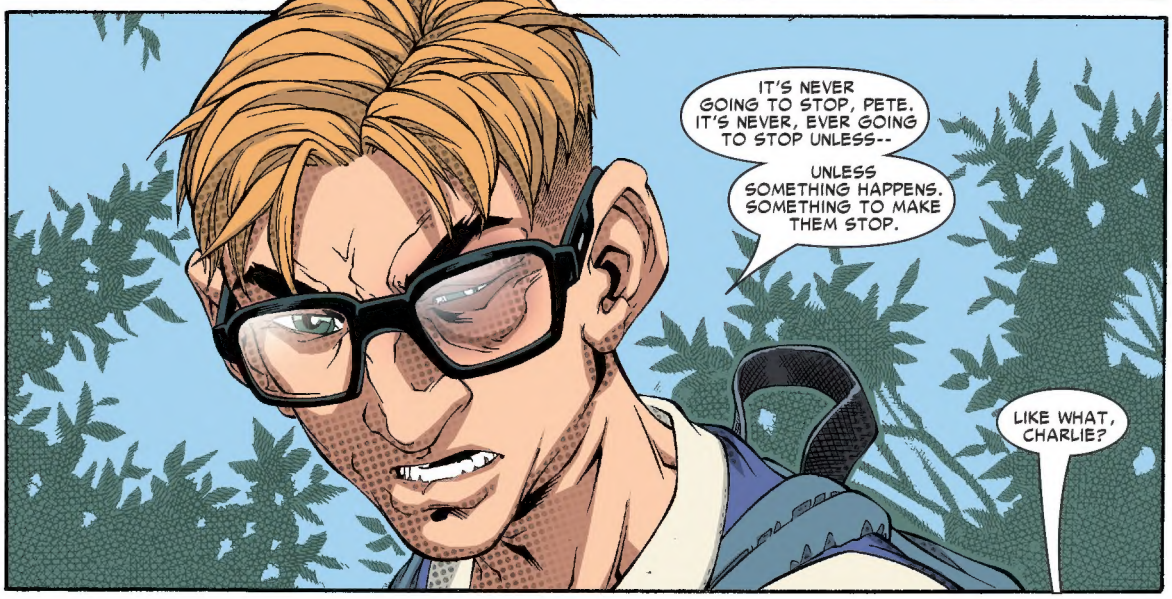
...OH MY GOD...
HOWEVER, ONE FIREMAN WAS KILLED AND ANOTHER HOSPITALIZED IN CRITICAL CONDITION FOLLOWING AN APPARENT STRUGGLE WITH A SURVIVOR FOUND ON THE SCENE. DETAILS ARE STILL SKETCHY AT THIS TIME--
PETER? WHAT'S WRONG?
PETER? DID YOU HEAR ME? I SAID WHAT'S--
--WRONG?
SIGH.
JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE PARKER HOUSEHOLD.
Damn it, I knew I shouldn't have left Charlie alone last night.
If he's been hurt, or worse, I'll never forgive my--
YES, HELLO, MRS. APPLETON? PETER PARKER HERE. I'M AFRAID I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CALL IN SICK.
AGAIN.
YES, MRS. APPLETON, I DO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER NUTRITION.
AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY STUDENTS, I GET THAT ONE TOO, I--
YES, MA'AM...YES, MA'AM...YES, MA'AM...
If something went wrong on its own, that's bad enough. I just hope he didn't do anything stupid to make the situation worse.

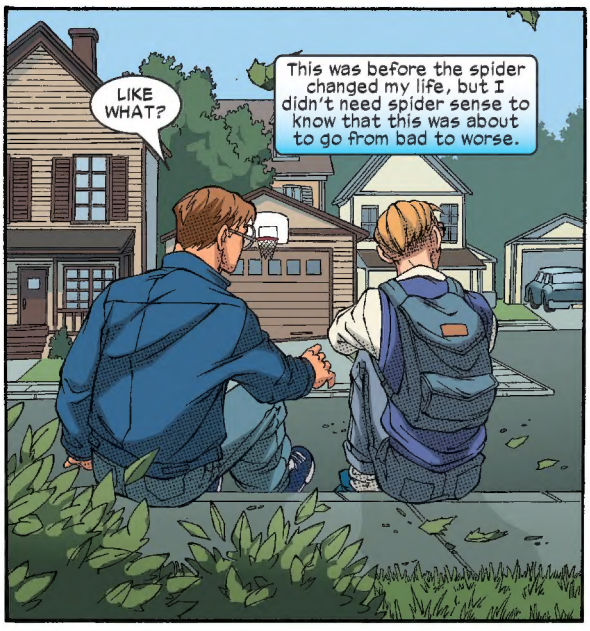

Because it wouldn't be the first time.
HEY, CHARLIE...YOU OKAY?
YEAH, I...YEAH, I'M OKAY. I JUST--
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR EYE?
I...RAN INTO A DOOR. IT WAS STUPID, I TURNED TOO FAST AND--
CHARLIE, C'MON, THIS IS ME. WHAT HAPPENED?
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY MORE, PETE, I JUST... I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY MORE.
THEY WAIT FOR ME. EVERY DAY. THEY WAIT FOR ME.
"SOME DAYS I TRY TAKING A DIFFERENT ROAD HOME... SOMETIMES I WAIT AT THE LIBRARY FOR AN HOUR AFTER CLASS, FIGURING SOONER OR LATER THEY'LL GET BORED AND MOVE ON.
"SOMETIMES I EVEN LET MYSELF THINK THAT TODAY, JUST TODAY, I CAN GET HOME WITHOUT BEING HASSLED OR BEAT-UP, OR--
"BUT THEY FIND ME. THEY ALWAYS FIND ME. AND THEN...

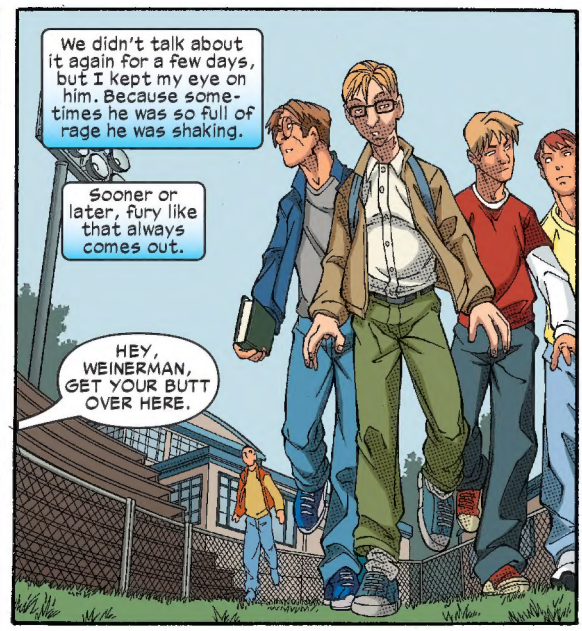
"...AND THEN...
"EVERY DAY.
"EVERY.
"DAY."
MIDTOWN


HAVE YOU TRIED TELLING ANYBODY?
WHAT ABOUT YOUR FOLKS? I MEAN, THEY'VE GOT TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON, RIGHT?
THE TEACHERS CAN'T DO ANYTHING, AND IF THEY GET SUSPENDED THEY'LL JUST TAKE IT OUT ON ME TWICE AS BAD.

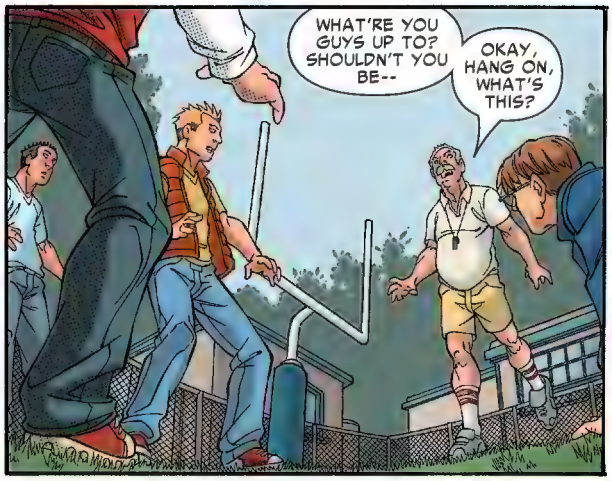
THEY DON'T SEE WHAT THEY DON'T WANT TO SEE. AND I DON'T WANT THEM TO SEE IT, ANYWAY.
SO I TELL THEM I TRIPPED, AND TORE MY PANTS, OR I FELL IN THE MUD, AND THEY DON'T... THEY DON'T ASK ANY QUESTIONS.

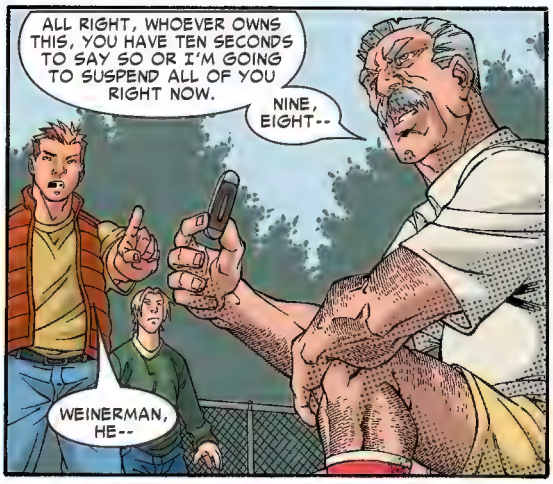

IT'S NEVER GOING TO STOP, PETE. IT'S NEVER, EVER GOING TO STOP UNLESS--
UNLESS SOMETHING HAPPENS. SOMETHING TO MAKE THEM STOP.
LIKE WHAT, CHARLIE?

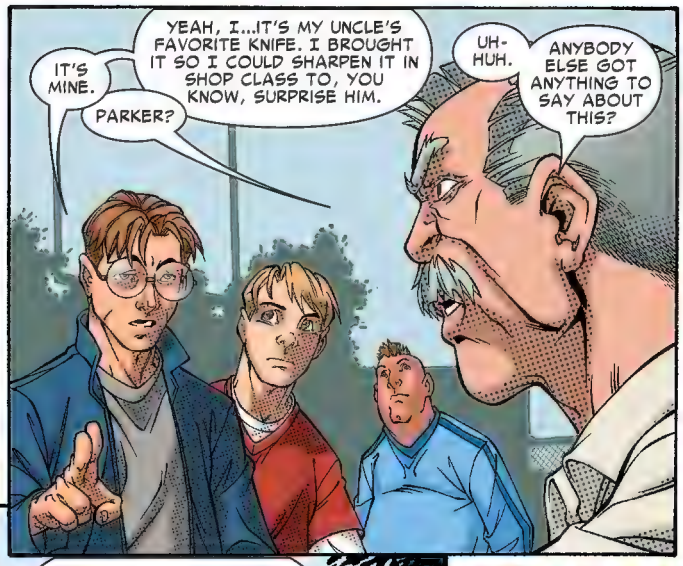

LIKE WHAT?
This was before the spider changed my life, but I didn't need spider sense to know that this was about to go from bad to worse.

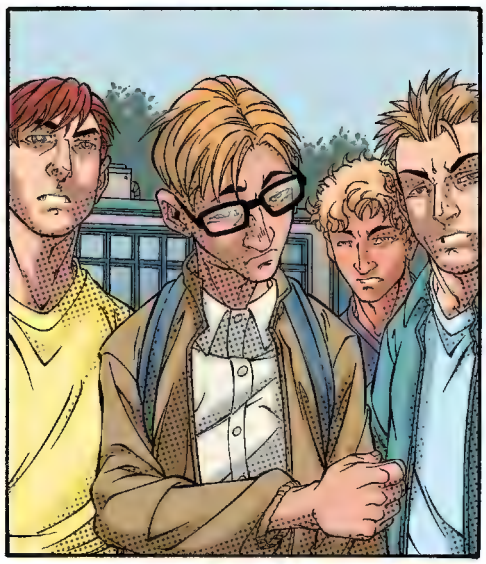

We didn't talk about it again for a few days, but I kept my eye on him. Because sometimes he was so full of rage he was shaking.
Sooner or later, fury like that always comes out.
HEY, WEINERMAN, GET YOUR BUTT OVER HERE.

YOU CAN'T GO THIS WAY. ONLY NORMAL GUYS CAN GO OUT THE BACK WAY. NON-GEEKS. YOU GOTTA GO OUT THE FRONT.
LOOK, IT'S JUST A SHORTCUT, IT--
THEN IT'S FIVE BUCKS. WE GOTTA USE THAT TO PAY FOR THE SPRAY TO CLEAN OUT YOUR STENCH.
CAN'T MAKE ME PAY JUST TO--
WHAT'D YOU SAY, BUTTWIPE? DID YOU JUST SAY NO?
Then I saw it.
LOOK, I DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE--
YEAH, WELL, TROUBLE IS WHAT YOU'RE GONNA GET, YOU SON OF A--
STAY BACK! I MEAN IT, I--
Saw the knife in his hand.
OOOF!
WHAT THE-- HEY!
SORRY, I GOT MY FOOT CAUGHT IN A STUPID GOPHER HOLE AND--
HEY... HEY!
HE WAS PULLING A KNIFE ON US! HE--
OKAY, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?


WHAT'RE YOU GUYS UP TO? SHOULDN'T YOU BE--
OKAY, HANG ON, WHAT'S THIS?

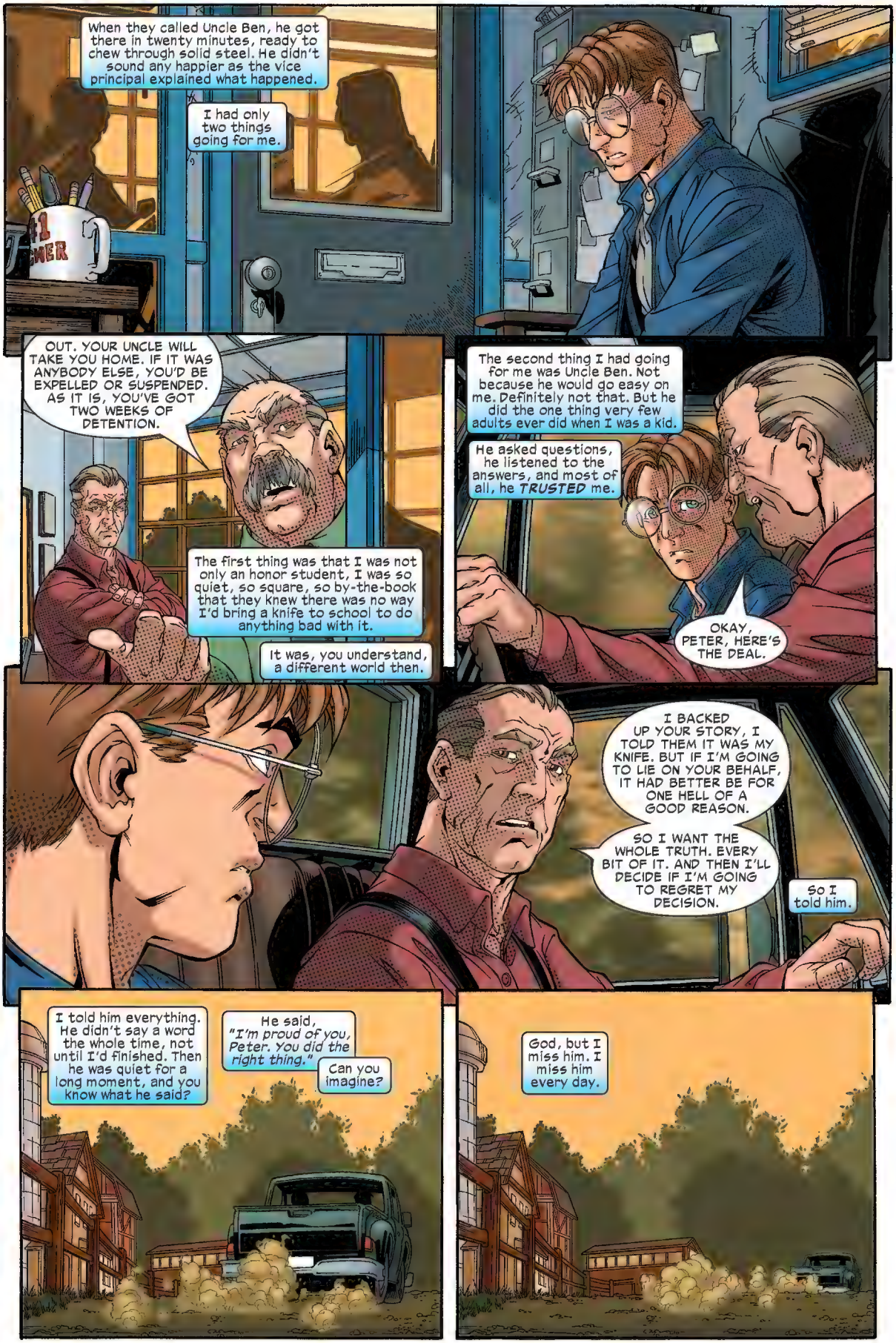

ALL RIGHT, WHOEVER OWNS THIS, YOU HAVE TEN SECONDS TO SAY SO OR I'M GOING TO SUSPEND ALL OF YOU RIGHT NOW.
NINE, EIGHT--
WEINERMAN, HE--


IT'S MINE.
YEAH, I...IT'S MY UNCLE'S FAVORITE KNIFE. I BROUGHT IT SO I COULD SHARPEN IT IN SHOP CLASS TO, YOU KNOW, SURPRISE HIM.
PARKER?
UH-HUH.
ANYBODY ELSE GOT ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THIS?



OKAY, PARKER. YOU, ME, THE VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. RIGHT NOW. THE REST OF YOU, GET GOING, I DON'T WANT TO HEAR A PEEP FROM ANY OF YOU.

YOU REALLY THINK HE--
SHUDDUP... WE'LL DEAL WITH THIS LATER.
It was the only way to keep Charlie from doing something stupid. But I figured I was sunk for sure.


When they called Uncle Ben, he got there in twenty minutes, ready to chew through solid steel. He didn't sound any happier as the vice principal explained what happened.
I had only two things going for me.
OUT. YOUR UNCLE WILL TAKE YOU HOME. IF IT WAS ANYBODY ELSE, YOU'D BE EXPELLED OR SUSPENDED. AS IT IS, YOU'VE GOT TWO WEEKS OF DETENTION.
The first thing was that I was not only an honor student, I was so quiet, so square, so by-the-book that they knew there was no way I'd bring a knife to school to do anything bad with it.
It was, you understand, a different world then.
The second thing I had going for me was Uncle Ben. Not because he would go easy on me. Definitely not that. But he did the one thing very few adults ever did when I was a kid.
He asked questions, he listened to the answers, and most of all, he TRUSTED me.
OKAY, PETER, HERE'S THE DEAL.
I BACKED UP YOUR STORY, I TOLD THEM IT WAS MY KNIFE. BUT IF I'M GOING TO LIE ON YOUR BEHALF, IT HAD BETTER BE FOR ONE HELL OF A GOOD REASON.
SO I WANT THE WHOLE TRUTH. EVERY BIT OF IT. AND THEN I'LL DECIDE IF I'M GOING TO REGRET MY DECISION.
So I told him.
I told him everything. He didn't say a word the whole time, not until I'd finished. Then he was quiet for a long moment, and you know what he said?
He said, "I'm proud of you, Peter. You did the right thing."
Can you imagine?
God, but I miss him. I miss him every day.

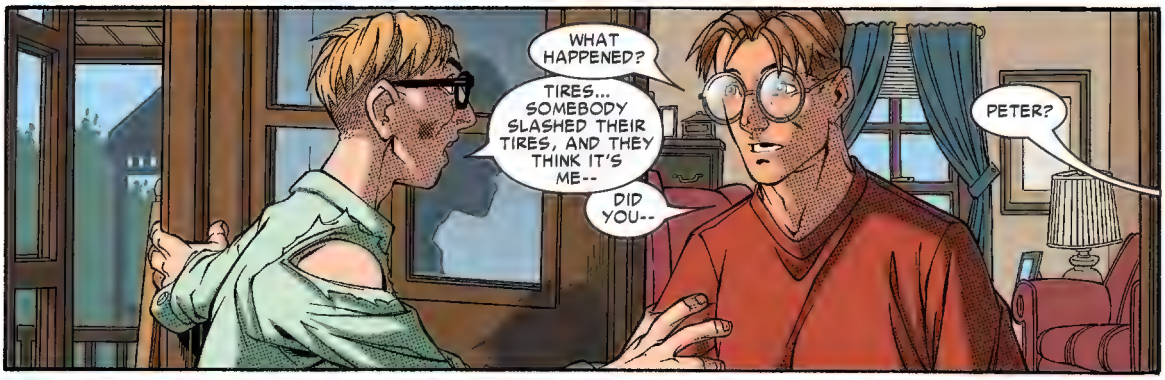
Because what Ben understood is that sometimes, if you don't intervene in time, things have a way of blowing up in your face.
Who knew the metaphor would end up being this literal?
OKAY, SO WHAT'VE WE GOT?
WE'VE CONTACTED THE OWNER OF THE FACILITY, WHO CONFIRMED THAT IT WAS LEASED TO A CHARLES A. WEIDERMAN, RESIDING AT 1423 CLEMENTINE AVENUE.
WE'VE CALLED THE RESIDENCE THREE TIMES, NO ANSWER, SO A UNIT HAS BEEN DISPATCHED TO THAT ADDRESS TO SEE IF HE'S THERE.
GOOD. HOW ARE WE ON CONTAMINATION?
SO FAR THE DAMAGE SEEMS CONFINED TO THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY. HE WAS WORKING WITH A LOT OF HEAVIER COMPOUNDS, WHICH MINIMIZED THE DEGREE OF SPREAD CAUSED BY THE BLAST.
SOME OF THE CHEMICALS ARE PRETTY TOXIC, AND COULD HAVE PSYCHOTROPIC EFFECTS IF ABSORBED INTO THE SKIN. STILL, ACCORDING TO THE INVOICES, MOST OF IT WAS LEGALLY PURCHASED AND LICENSED.
HE WAS NOT, HOWEVER, PROPERLY LICENSED TO USE SOME OF THE MORE VOLATILE COMPOUNDS, INCLUDING VIBRANIUM.
I THOUGHT VIBRANIUM WAS PRETTY STABLE.
NORMALLY, IT IS. IF I HAD TO GUESS FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, I THINK THEY WERE TRYING TO MOVE IT FROM A SOLID INTO A LIQUID FORM USING SOME FAIRLY VOLATILE MEDIUMS THAT CHANGED THE NATURE OF THE COMPOUND AT THE MOLECULAR LEVEL.
AT SOME POINT THERE WAS A REACTION, AND INSTEAD OF ABSORBING THE ENERGY USED IN THE PROCESS, THE VIBRANIUM AMPLIFIED IT UNTIL IT REACHED CRITICAL MASS.
Damn it, Charlie, I tried to warn you.

ANY WAY YOU SLICE IT, THERE WERE INSUFFICIENT SAFEGUARDS, THE SITE WAS WORKING ON UNLICENSED PROCESSES--
SO AT MINIMUM, WE'RE LOOKING AT MANSLAUGHTER CHARGES, MAYBE SECOND-DEGREE MURDER. OR FIRST, GIVEN WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING.
FEMA
ANY MORE INFORMATION ON THE SUSPECT?
WE STILL DON'T HAVE AN I.D. ON HIM YET. WE'VE PUT OUT AN A.P.B., BUT SO FAR NOTHING. BUT SINCE THE GUY WAS COVERED IN THE SAME KIND OF METAL WE FOUND IN THE LAB, IT'S NOT LIKE HE CAN HIDE FOR LONG.
WE'LL FIND HIM, SOONER OR LATER.
MACKIE? WHAT IS IT?
I'M NOT SURE...
"...I THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHING MOVING."

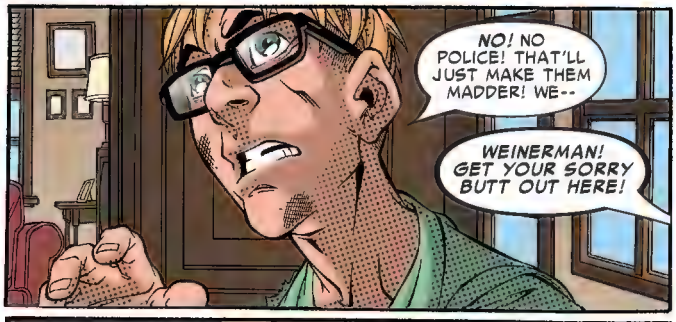
Okay, since Charlie was the only one still working at the lab last night, we have two options.
Option One: Charlie was working when someone attacked him and got himself covered with a Vibranium skinsuit, maybe intentionally, maybe not.
Option Two: because I told Charlie I wasn't going to cover up for him, he did something profoundly stupid like rush things in order to prove that he could control the process.
GEE WHIZ, MR. PARKER, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE ODDS ARE ON OPTION TWO?
NOK NOK
COMING...
NOK NOK NOK NOK
Either way, he's in trouble. If it's Option One, I may have to find him and save him from whoever did this.
If it's Option Two, then I don't have to worry, because sooner or later--

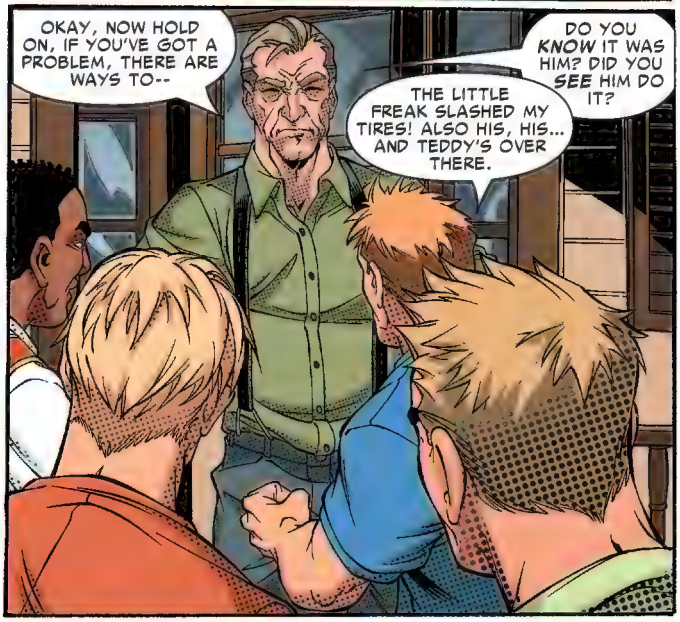
--he'll find me.
YOU HAVE TO HELP ME, PETE...PLEASE, YOU HAVE TO HELP ME!

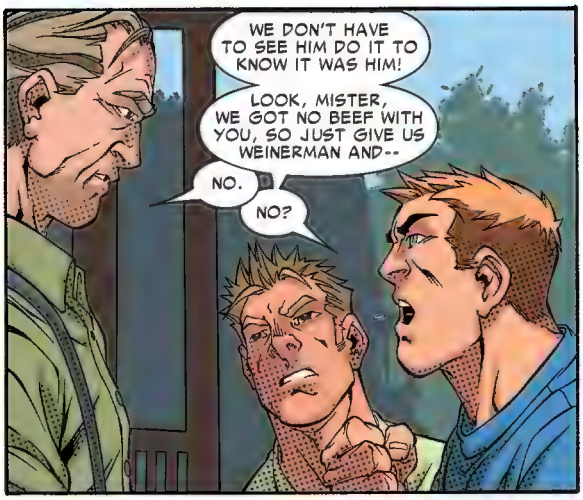
Because it wouldn't be the first time...and because no good deed goes unpunished.
YOU HAVE TO HELP ME, PETE...PLEASE, YOU HAVE TO HELP ME!


WHAT HAPPENED?
TIRES... SOMEBODY SLASHED THEIR TIRES, AND THEY THINK IT'S ME--
DID YOU--
PETER?

WHAT'S GOING ON? I--
CHARLIE? ARE YOU OKAY?
THEY'RE AFTER ME...YOU HAVE TO LET ME HIDE HERE--
SON, IF YOU'RE IN SOME KIND OF TROUBLE, WE SHOULD CALL THE POLICE--


NO! NO POLICE! THAT'LL JUST MAKE THEM MADDER! WE--
WEINERMAN! GET YOUR SORRY BUTT OUT HERE!


OKAY, NOW HOLD ON, IF YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM, THERE ARE WAYS TO--
DO YOU KNOW IT WAS HIM? DID YOU SEE HIM DO IT?
THE LITTLE FREAK SLASHED MY TIRES! ALSO HIS, HIS... AND TEDDY'S OVER THERE.


WE DON'T HAVE TO SEE HIM DO IT TO KNOW IT WAS HIM!
LOOK, MISTER, WE GOT NO BEEF WITH YOU, SO JUST GIVE US WEINERMAN AND--
NO.
NO?

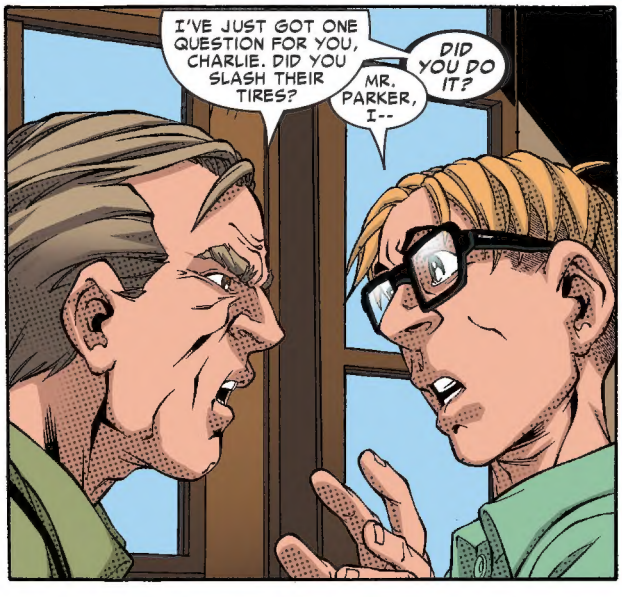
NO.
BEN, MAYBE I SHOULD CALL THE--
NOW, YOU'VE GOT ONE CHANCE TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE OR THERE'S GOING TO BE TROUBLE. BECAUSE THE ONLY WAY YOU'RE GETTING IN THAT HOUSE IS TO GO THROUGH ME.

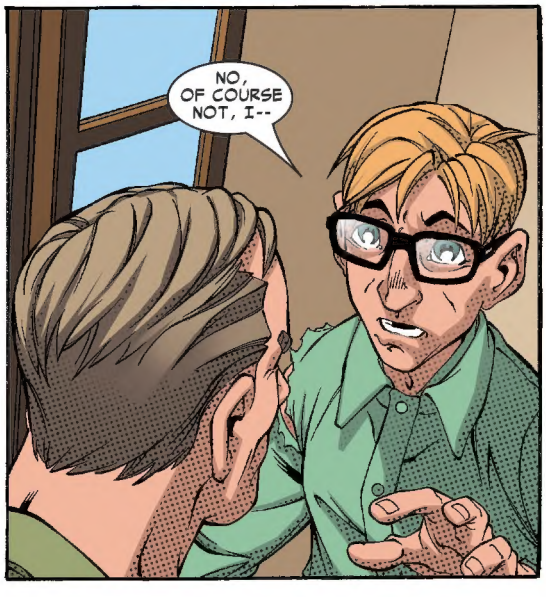
HEY, YOU KNOW WHAT?
I GOT NO PROBLEM WITH THAT.
OOOOOOFF!

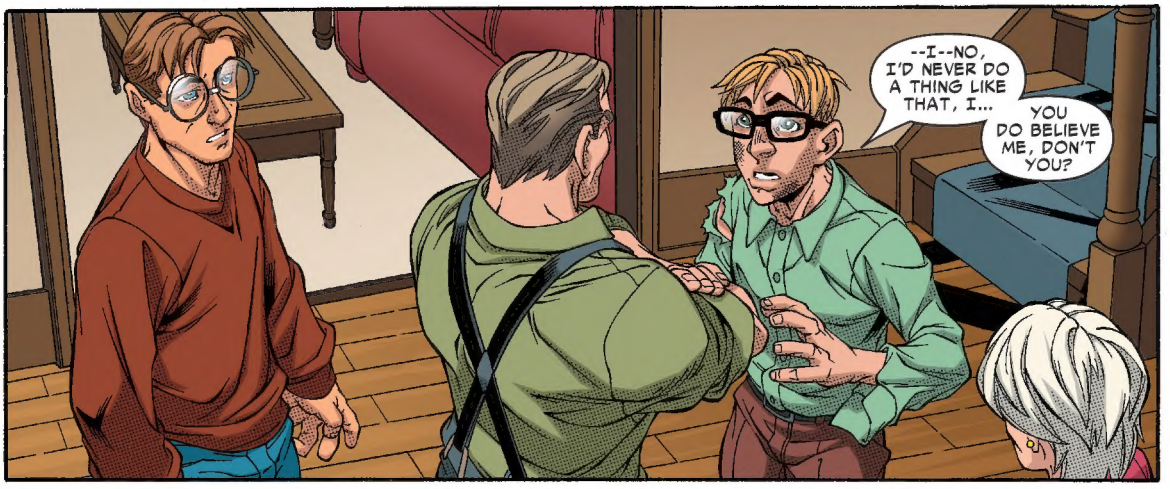
ANYBODY ELSE WANT TO EXPERIENCE FIRSTHAND WHAT YOU CAN LEARN IN ARMY BASIC TRAINING?
NO?
THEN I SUGGEST THE BUNCH OF YOU CLEAR OUT NOW, BEFORE WE DO CALL THE POLICE.

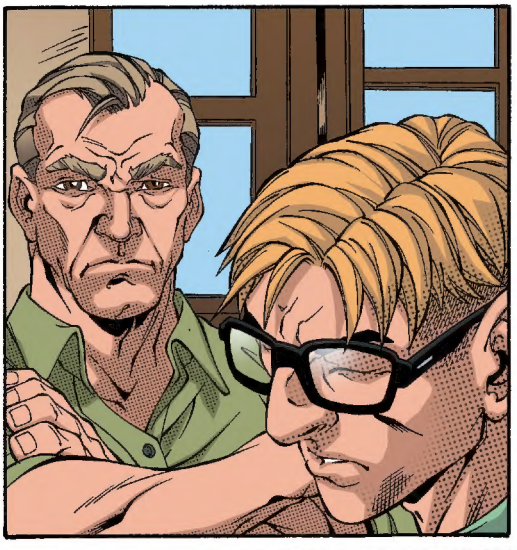
GO ON... SCAT!
Have I mentioned recently how much I miss him?

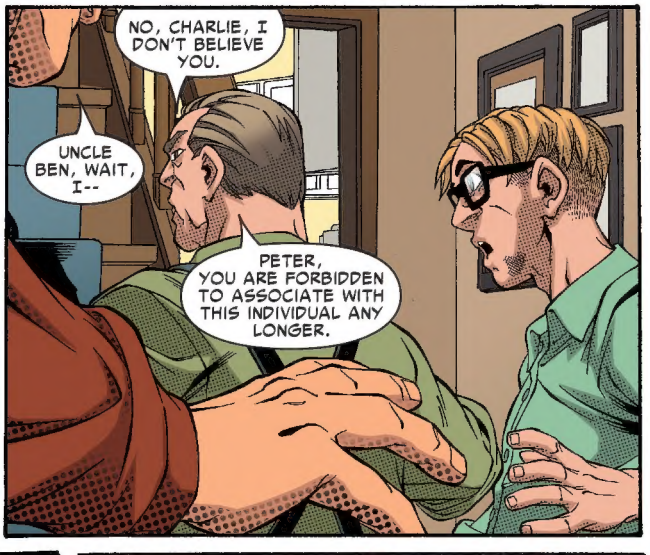
BEN, ARE YOU--
I'M FINE, MAY.
MR. PARKER, I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR--
SAVE IT.


I'VE JUST GOT ONE QUESTION FOR YOU, CHARLIE. DID YOU SLASH THEIR TIRES?
MR. PARKER, I--
DID YOU DO IT?


NO, OF COURSE NOT, I--


--I--NO, I'D NEVER DO A THING LIKE THAT, I...
YOU DO BELIEVE ME, DON'T YOU?




NO, CHARLIE, I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.
UNCLE BEN, WAIT, I--
PETER, YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO ASSOCIATE WITH THIS INDIVIDUAL ANY LONGER.

IF YOU'D HAD THE BASIC MORAL COURAGE TO ADMIT WHAT YOU'D DONE, I COULD AT LEAST RESPECT YOU. BUT NOW--
YOU HAVE HALF AN HOUR, ENOUGH TIME FOR THOSE CREEPS TO MOVE ON. THEN YOU'RE TO GET OUT OF THIS HOUSE AND NEVER RETURN.

PETER, YOU'RE SMART, REAL SMART, AND YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A HARD TIME OF IT. YOU'RE ALSO A GOOD KID, AND IF YOU START HANGING OUT WITH THE WRONG CROWD--

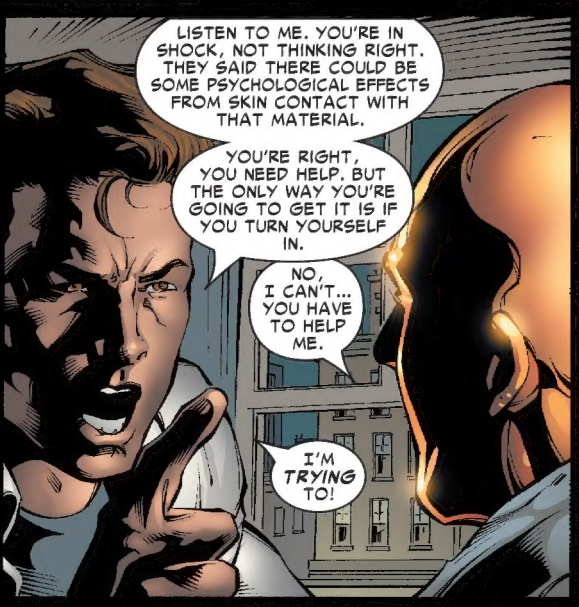
"--THERE'S NO TELLING WHERE YOU MIGHT END UP."
IT WAS A MISTAKE, THAT'S ALL...I WAS TRYING TO ACCELERATE THE PROCESS AND--
AND YOU SCREWED UP. YOU DID EXACTLY WHAT I TOLD YOU NOT TO DO.
I CAN FIX IT--

CHARLIE, TWO PEOPLE ARE DEAD AND A BUNCH MORE ARE HURT. HOW DO YOU FIX THAT? THEY SAW YOU--
AND THEN WHAT?
THEY SAW THIS...HOW I LOOK... BUT THEY STILL DON'T KNOW IT'S ME UNDER THE SKINSUIT. IF I CAN GET IT OFF, I CAN AT LEAST SAY I WASN'T THERE--

I...WELL, I WAS THINKING I COULD SAY I WAS WORKING, AND SPIDER-MAN BROKE INTO THE PLACE. THERE WAS A FIGHT, AND--
C'MON, YOU READ THE BUGLE, PEOPLE WOULD BELIEVE IT. DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA?

NO.
I DON'T.

PETE, I NEED YOUR HELP. I CAN'T GO BACK TO THE LAB, BUT YOU CAN GET ME THE MATERIAL I NEED TO TRY AND GET THIS OFF. I...I HADN'T GOTTEN TO THAT PART OF THE PROCESS YET, BUT I THINK I KNOW HOW TO DO IT.
IT'LL COST A LOT, AND I CAN'T GET TO MY ACCOUNTS LIKE THIS, BUT IF YOU CAN JUST--
NO.


LISTEN TO ME. YOU'RE IN SHOCK, NOT THINKING RIGHT. THEY SAID THERE COULD BE SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS FROM SKIN CONTACT WITH THAT MATERIAL.
YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU NEED HELP. BUT THE ONLY WAY YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT IS IF YOU TURN YOURSELF IN.
NO, I CAN'T... YOU HAVE TO HELP ME.
I'M TRYING TO!

NO...YOU WANT ME IN JAIL SO YOU CAN TAKE THE CREDIT FOR MY WORK! YOU'VE ALWAYS KNOWN I'M SMARTER THAN YOU!
CHARLIE, DON'T BE RIDICULOUS--
DON'T YOU TALK TO ME LIKE THAT!
KRASH!
NOW YOU LISTEN TO ME...YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME, PETE...YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME GET OUT OF THIS--
OR I SWEAR I'LL KILL YOU AND EVERYONE AROUND YOU!
TO BE CONTINUED...